

Nystrom Neighborhood Report

Richmond, California



prepared for the
National Park Service
Richmond, California

prepared by
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I. Introduction

The National Park Service contracted with Architectural Resources Group (ARG) to define the characteristic features and historic structures within the vicinity of the Nystrom neighborhood in Richmond, California. The area studied was defined by the boundaries of the Nystrom neighborhood, roughly corresponding to the location of the 70-acre lot originally owned by J.R. Nystrom at the end of the 19th century and now defined by Ohio Avenue to the north, 14th Street at the east, Cutting Boulevard to the south, and South 10th Street, now Harbor Way, at the west. The area is largely residential and lies in a middle ground between Richmond's downtown along Macdonald Avenue toward the north and the former shipyards to the south and is part of a larger neighborhood known today as Coronado.

Located within Contra Costa County, the City of Richmond, was incorporated in 1905, and currently has an approximate population of 100,000. Richmond has a rich and diverse history. The early settlement patterns of the late 19th and early 20th century are still visible within Richmond starting at Point Richmond and fanning out toward the gridded streetscape to the east. (See maps at Appendices A-D.) The region's scenic environment is defined by the shoreline and San Francisco Bay beyond. Richmond's historic and cultural resources are a diverse collection of early industrial sites, maritime resources, and historic buildings. These include resources with statewide and national importance, as well as resources of primarily local significance. Within the vicinity of the Nystrom neighborhood the resources listed on

the National Register are: the Ford Motor Assembly Plant; the Point Richmond Historic District; Shipyard No. 3; and, the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park commemorating the WWII Home Front effort. In addition, there are various resources in the vicinity that have been identified as historically significant in the Contra Costa County Preliminary Historic Resources Inventory. Contemporary to Nystrom Village is Atchison Village, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

II. Methodology

For this project ARG reviewed relevant historic data related to Richmond, California, and, where possible, specific data related to the Nystrom neighborhood, as is explained in the following paragraph. Information was collected from primary and secondary sources with regard to general history, development of the area as gleaned from census records, maps, books, articles, photographs, and previous reports. The collections of the Richmond Public Library, Local History Collection, the Richmond Museum, the Richmond Planning Department, the San Francisco Public Library, the California Historical Society, National Park Service Pacific Great Basin Support Office Records, and several on-line research collections were consulted. The Richmond Public Library maintains a separate Richmond Collection, including vertical files, published and unpublished works. City directories for Richmond were used at the Richmond Public Library. The study area was photographed and its integrity analyzed based on existing conditions

and a review of historic maps. This report relies on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Richmond to compare present day streetscape configurations to historic. The Sanborn Map Company recorded Richmond in the years 1903, 1905, 1910, 1916, 1930 and 1951, updated in 1962. The Sanborn maps of Richmond that pre-date 1916 are not relevant to this report as the vicinity around the 70-acre Nystrom lot was first recorded in 1916. In addition, historic contexts were formulated, identifying such themes as historic settlement patterns, agricultural and residential development, architecture, and industry.

III. Early Richmond History

The city of Richmond is located on a portion of land once part of Rancho San Pablo, the Mexican land grant ceded to Don Francisco Castro in 1823. While the settlement of the town centered around Point Richmond, and along the bay shoreline to the west, the east was open land, dotted with fields and farms. In 1895 Augustin Sylvester Macdonald visited Point Richmond and conceived the idea of a transcontinental rail terminal and ferry service to provide a direct route from Richmond to San Francisco. Macdonald presented his idea to the Santa Fe Railroad and in 1899 the railroad established its western terminus in Point Richmond. Augustin S. Macdonald, also known as Augustus S. Macdonald, was influential in the establishment of the town of Richmond. Born in San Francisco in 1865, Macdonald was of Scotch descent. According to Who's Who, Macdonald was a capitalist by profession, with interests in land, water, mining, oil and timber enterprises. He was also active in the arts and was

well known as a patron of the arts.¹ Augustus McDonald's diverse accomplishments include: founder and director of the Oakland, Richmond and San Francisco Chambers of Commerce; founder and first president of the Boy Scouts (likely a local chapter); Children's Park Playground Commission; president of the Alameda County Historical Society; president of the California State Historical Association, California Historical Society; life member of the San Francisco Arts Association; member of the California Book Club and the Pacific Union Club, author of books, pamphlets and articles on the Pacific, collector of Californiana, books relating to the Pacific, and drama art, etchings and Asian prints. While he was president of the Richmond Wharf and Dock Company (circa 1932), he authored San Francisco Bay Terminals: Richmond Harbor, California. In 1940 he resided at 325 Vernon Street, Oakland, California.²

IV. Nystrom Neighborhood Overview

Boundaries of the Nystrom Neighborhood

The Nystrom neighborhood is part of a larger area historically known as Southside, located toward the shoreline, on the southern side of the city of Richmond. (See maps at Appendices A-D.) The Nystrom neighborhood forms the large north-west corner of an expanded area also known today as the Coronado neighborhood within Southside. Coronado is bordered by Ohio Avenue to the north, the 23rd Street at the east, Wright Avenue to the south, and South 10th Street, now Harbor Way, at the west.³ The Coronado neigh-

borhood also includes the original Griffin Watrous Addition Tract. The Coronado neighborhood is ringed by the following neighborhoods: Santa Fe to the west, City Center to the north, Cortez/Stege on the east, and Marina Bay, an area of light industry, research and development, and newer residential to the south.⁴

The Nystrom neighborhood boundaries roughly correspond to the location of the lot originally owned by J.R. Nystrom at the end of the 19th century, now defined by Ohio Avenue to the north, the South 14th Street at the east, Cutting Boulevard to the south, and South 10th Street at the west, now Harbor Way South. Predominantly residential, the neighborhood corresponds to city blocks 3790 & 3800. The adjacent neighborhoods on the east and west are residential and similar to the Nystrom neighborhood in terms of scale, use, density and gridded streetscape. To the south and farther west, it is bordered by various industries and major warehousing activities, as well as the Inner Harbor Area and the Santa Fe Channel. To the north it is bordered by and separated from the Iron Triangle Neighborhood by the Santa Fe Tracks, parallel to Ohio Avenue. The busiest and widest streets are north-south running Harbor Way South (formerly South 10th Street), which forms a strong east-west axis with Cutting Boulevard. Historic resources are evenly scattered throughout the study area, as opposed to being clustered in a particular grouping or along a specific street.

Nystrom Family & Biographical Background

The area's place name was taken from that of the local property owner, John Richard Nystrom. The following information is from Nystrom's obituary.⁵

Nystrom was born August 28, 1848 on a farm named Kallis near Gamllakarleby, now known as Kokkola, Vaasa Province, Finland. He was the son of Johan and Johanna Nystrom, of Swedish-Finn extraction and their son spoke Swedish. At age sixteen he left home to become a deckhand and, within a few years, rose to the rank of seaman. On arrival in San Francisco after four years of service, in 1871, Nystrom left the sea and found a job on one of the many scow schooners sailing San Francisco Bay. Those small, shallow-draft cargo vessels carried a crew of two or three men. Captain George Ellis owned two scow schooners and operated a small dock and warehouse at Ellis Landing, now Richmond. Nystrom worked aboard the scow Sierra and rose from sailor to its master and eventually became manager of nearby Stege Landing, also operated by Captain Ellis. In September of 1881, Nystrom quit that career and bought a seventy-acre farm near Ellis Landing. When he retired from farming to go into the real estate business, Nystrom eventually partitioned this land into lots forming a subdivision known as the Nystrom Addition Tract.

John Nystrom married Mary Griffins, the eighteen year-old daughter of a neighbor on December 1, 1881.⁶ The Nystroms had eleven children, one of which died in childhood. Nystrom was elected to Richmond's first local school board and served for fifteen years and also served one term (1906-1908) as city trustee. Nystrom was active in the First Presbyterian Church and the Masonic

Lodge. Nystrom died in 1913 at the age of sixty-five and was survived by his wife and children.⁷ He is remembered as a pioneer and early promoter of Richmond who was involved in many aspects of early life in the city, including maritime interests, farming and ranching, civic leadership, and later real estate development. Many of Nystrom's children and grandchildren remained in the area and continued his spirit of civic involvement. Nystrom's name survives for its affiliation with the Nystrom Addition Tract, the Nystrom School, Nystrom Village and the general neighborhood, which corresponds to the boundaries of the old family farm and orchard.

Like the Nystrom neighborhood, other streets and places in Richmond take their names from those of local landowners of the late 1800s, such as Nichol Avenue named for John Nicholl, Stege Landing named for Edith Stege and C.C. Stege, and Tewksbury Avenue named for E.S. Tewksbury.

Nystrom Addition Tract

The town of Richmond has its origins at Point Richmond, a hilly village-like area with parallels to old Sausalito. Founded at approximately the same time, both bayside towns were dense, prosperous transportation junctions, each characterized by an industrial harbor, steep and narrow streets, residential areas of homes of a similar scale embracing a central commercial core with shops and businesses, churches, boatyards, water related industries of fishing and shipbuilding, a shoreline defined by mud flats, and termini of rail lines, the North Pacific Coast Railroad in

Sausalito and the Santa Fe Railroad in Point Richmond.

Point Richmond's residential areas skirt the historic business district, which dates to the late 19th century. Point Richmond gained prominence in 1899 with the construction of the terminus of the Santa Fe railroad. At that time, the small harbor of Ellis Landing was located to the east of Point Richmond. The flat lands of vast grain fields were still farther east in the location of gridded, present-day Richmond. Richmond's downtown along Macdonald Avenue did not emerge as the city's business center until the 1920s.⁸

Still a very small town with a population of 2,150, Richmond was formally incorporated in 1905.⁹ Two years prior to the town's official organization, J.R. Nystrom parceled his farmland into city lots and annexed them to Point Richmond to the west. Known as the Nystrom Addition to Point Richmond, the area was filed as a subdivision on March 20, 1903.¹⁰ Like other early settlers and ranchers in the area, Nystrom sold his own lots, and joined in the business of buying and subdividing. Entrepreneurial real estate companies, such as Burg Brothers Inc. with offices at 660 Market Street in San Francisco, opened branch offices in Richmond to take advantage of the newly available lands.¹¹

Nystrom Neighborhood Development & Character

The Nystrom neighborhood developed from grain fields and dairy farms of the late 19th century, specifically the Nystrom farm, and evolved into a

predominantly residential enclave. According to Sanborn maps, the Nystrom farm, centerpiece of the present Nystrom neighborhood, was comprised of a house that was surrounded by open land and an orchard north of the house. In 1908 Nystrom donated land on South 13th Street near his home for a new school upon which the Nystrom Elementary school was built. The school was later moved to the location of the existing Nystrom School, originally the site of the Nystrom family home. The neighborhood remains home to early education facilities. The predominant use in the area is residential, dominated by single-family homes, with numerous duplexes and apartments.

Nystrom Village was a 102-unit public housing project constructed in a garden setting at the start of World War II. The village is still extant and intact. Richmond played a significant part in the World War II home front. The four Kaiser Shipyards produced 747 ships, more than any other shipyard complex in the country. As workers from across the nation migrated to secure defense jobs in California, Richmond grew from 24,000 residents to over 100,000 in a few short years. Richmond has World War II era buildings and sites that have retained their historic integrity, and former home front sites that have been converted to new uses. Structures remaining from the World War II period, include two child development centers, a fire station, war workers' housing and the Kaiser Field Hospital. The Field Hospital was used for health care for shipyard workers. It remains a symbol of Kaiser's efforts to boost worker productivity and the pre-paid health plan

that became Kaiser Permanente. The Maritime and Ruth C. Powers Child Development Centers were originally built to serve families working in Richmond's home front industries and have been in continuous use as daycare facilities since the war. With some housing for war workers still intact, the Nystrom neighborhood retains much of its WWII-era appearance and feeling.

Many homes from the early Richmond era also remain in the Nystrom neighborhood. These residences cannot be classified as agricultural, but they are not truly urban in character either. The architecture of the houses is semi-rural having been inspired by the Victorian farmhouse model. Nonetheless, the majority of housing can be characterized as development dating to World War II and post-war infill housing. In the mid-1960s a number of modest multi-family housing units were constructed in the area.¹² The neighborhood also has a number of ecclesiastical buildings. There is no commercial center within the Nystrom neighborhood boundaries, but Southside has long been considered to be one of Richmond's most advantageous residential areas due to easy walking distances to the downtown area, the abundance of bus stops and proximity to work, schools and other facilities.

Though subdivided since 1903, Richmond remained only sparsely developed prior to World War II. Most of the city lots were uniformly partitioned. The Nystrom neighborhood is defined by a rigorous gridiron street pattern. The only deviation in the grid pattern appears at the large parcel of land bordered by Virginia and Florida Avenues, South 10th (now Harbor Way) and South 12th

Streets, the location of Nystrom School. Here the uniform pattern of blocks is interrupted. Although both Maine Avenue and South 11th Street continue on either side of the block, neither bisects it. This parcel roughly corresponds to the old Nystrom orchard. One of the distinguished features of the Nystrom Addition Tract was that rear alleys bisected each block. The alleys were not common to all blocks and streets in this part of Richmond, but appear to have been consistent in the Nystrom blocks.

Topographically, the neighborhood has always been flat with the southern border trailing off into the marsh lands of the pre-settlement era. Early maps specify these areas as “mud flats.” For many years the lack of storm drains created major flooding problems in this area. Storm drains were constructed in most parts of the neighborhood in the late 1960s, however, periodic problems still occur in some streets.¹³ Historically a sparse landscape, the area is lacking in street trees. Lightly populated until the late 1930s, the neighborhood underwent dramatic change during the WWII era.

V. Historic Contexts

The establishment of historic contexts is vital to understanding a neighborhood. In order to evaluate the significance of the Nystrom neighborhood, several historic contexts have been identified.

Historic contexts are those patterns and trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history or pre-history is made clear.¹⁴

Historic contexts can illustrate broad patterns of development in a community or a region that may be represented by historical resources and can be identified through analyzing the history of individual properties or groupings of properties within the surrounding area. Historic contexts can be developed for all types of resources including, but not limited to, buildings, structures, objects, sites and historic districts. The following historical contexts are relevant to the Nystrom neighborhood.

1. Context: Early Settlement

The city of Richmond is located on a portion of land once part of Rancho San Pablo, the Mexican land grant ceded to Don Francisco Castro in 1823. While the settlement of the town centered around Point Richmond, a result of Augustin Macdonald’s concept of transcontinental rail terminal and ferry service to San Francisco, the open land to the east was dotted with fields and farms. Although the configuration of the Nystrom tract is still readable, no historic resources related to this context such as the Nystrom farmhouse and family home remain.

2. Context: Early Industry

A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California held in the Richmond Public Library describes early industry in Richmond as follows:

Nystrom was The first overland passenger train arrived in Richmond from Chicago in 1900. Santa Fe moved its shops to Richmond in 1901, and the Standard Oil Company built its refinery there in the same year. When

Richmond incorporated as a city in 1905 it had a population of 2,150 and was already an established industrial town. The city charter was adopted in 1909 and by 1910 the town's population was 7,500. Within a few years, Richmond saw the following substantial industries locate there: Winehaven Winery, Pullman Palace Car Shops, American Radiator, Standard Sanitary Company, Stauffer Chemical Company, among others. Town sites began to emerge around these industries as vast grain fields were subdivided into uniform city lots.¹⁵

Although no industrial production or activity took place within the borders of the Nystrom tract, nearby industry impacted the residential neighborhood. Historic resources related to an industrial context do not exist in the study area. Residences related to this context, houses which housed workers in the nearby industries, may remain.

3. Context: WWII/Kaiser Shipyards

The most dramatic chapter in Richmond's history began with the onset of World War II, which had a profound long-term effect on the town. One of the biggest wartime shipbuilding operations on the West Coast, the Kaiser Richmond shipyards, located along Richmond's south shoreline, began operation in January 1941. The manpower required to fuel the shipyard resulted in sweeping migration of workers to Richmond, explosive growth, and a stress on the town's infrastructure. Richmond's population increased from 23,600 in 1940 to over 93,700 in 1943 as tens of thousands of new residents migrated from the economically depressed South and Southwest to work in the shipyards. Industrial land in the South shore har-

bor area, underutilized at that time, became the wartime shipyards through extensive tideland infilling. The Nystrom neighborhood also called Southside was among the nearest adjacent neighborhoods to the industrial land near the south shore.¹⁶

Though modified, remnants of historic resources related to this context remain outside the Nystrom tract. Resources that supported this context, such as residences, remain.

4. Context: Post-war Industries

The shipyards closed in 1945. Both industrial production and the population declined rapidly. However, a number of new industries moved in to occupy the vacated shipyard structures and continued Richmond's longtime industrial tradition. These industries included Kaiser Aircraft, Garwood, Butler, Southwest Welding, Pacific Vegetable Oil, United Heckathorn and the first of the major warehousing operations, Ford Parts Depot and International Harvester.¹⁷ In 1955, war housing was cleared to provide sites for Safeway and United Grocers warehouses. United Heckathorn, a company that manufactured DDT into powder, was located on Bay marshlands on a site bordered by Cutting Boulevard. In 1992 the former United Heckathorn industrial site was listed on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Priorities List (NPL) and was classified as a public health hazard.¹⁸ One company whose presence in Richmond has been the most enduring is Chevron, formerly Standard Oil. This company and its subsidiaries have grown

steadily since the late 19th century and remains the city's major industrial employer.

Like the earlier era of industrial production, no activity took place within the borders of the Nystrom tract in the post-war era, though nearby industry impacted the residential neighborhood. Historic resources related to a post-war industrial context do not exist in the study area. Residences related to this context, houses of workers in the nearby industries, may remain.

5. Context: Population Growth/Changing Demographics

When Richmond's population increased as new residents migrated for shipyard work, the city's demographic configuration changed. This migration represented the first shift in racial diversity, as many of the migrant workers were African American. Though the pre-war population was largely Caucasian Anglo Americans, Italian Americans and Irish Americans, African Americans had resided in Richmond since its founding and were part of the city's industrial life as well. While African Americans in Richmond numbered just 29 out of a total population of 6,802 in 1910, by the mid-1940s, Richmond's African American population had increased dramatically. In 1940, the city's 24,000 residents included 270 African Americans. By 1943 this number had soared to 5,673 (in a total population of 100,000). The municipal health department estimated the city's population to be 106,000 in 1945 with African Americans numbering nearly 8,000. In 1947 a special federal census estimated that 13,780 African Americans lived in

Richmond. In seven years Richmond's African American population had grown by more than 5,000 %. ¹⁹ In 1970, the Southside's population was 91% African American, 6.6% Hispanic, 1.4% Caucasian and 1.1% other. ²⁰

As the Nystrom neighborhood grew and more families moved into the neighborhood, the need for school facilities increased. The 4-block parcel bordered by South 10th Street on the west, South 12th Street on the east, Virginia Avenue to the south, and Florida Avenue to the north is home to Nystrom Public School, located to the south of the Maritime Child Development Center. The Nystrom Elementary School and its associated buildings occupy the lots that originally formed the Nystrom family farm and orchard. Nearly all the buildings on this block, the site of the Old Nystrom Public School, are educational facilities that were built in the wartime or post-war era.

During the massive migration of workers into Richmond, the population increased from 23,600 in 1940 to over 93,700 in 1943, resulting in an unprecedented demand for housing. Tens of thousands of new residents migrated from the economically depressed South and Southwest to work in the shipyards. Much of the wartime worker population was housed in temporary structures. Dormitories, temporary houses, and apartment buildings of typically 9-13 units, were constructed; more than 60,000 persons lived in public housing. While many temporary housing units were demolished by the 1960s, many remain inhabited. Other public housing projects have proven successful and remain tenanted,

including Nystrom Village in the Nystrom neighborhood.

The Nystrom neighborhood is not served by a commercial center or strip of commercial buildings. The very limited commercial activity of the neighborhood is located at the perimeters; historically, this has always been the case. The existing commercial structure at 171 Harbor Way, Frosty King, built in 1949, sits just outside the western boundary of the Nystrom neighborhood. Another commercial structure, a grocery store, was moved to Cutting Boulevard in 1961, but the Kaiser Foundation immediately acquired it for use as a laboratory. The former grocery store building now functions as the county methadone clinic. After 1950, a gas station was constructed at the northwest corner of 14th Street and Cutting Boulevard, just within the Nystrom neighborhood boundary, but this no longer operates and is shuttered.

As stated in the previous paragraphs, many resources related to this context remain within the Nystrom tract.

6. Context: Architectural Styles & Materials

Within the Nystrom neighborhood there is a mix of residential, commercial, and ecclesiastical building types with the majority of the residential structures within a concentrated area north of Cutting Boulevard. The majority of housing in the Nystrom neighborhood can be characterized as development dating to World War II and post-war infill housing. Nonetheless, many homes from the early Richmond period are Victorian residences

that were once semi-rural; vernacular examples carried out in revival styles modified by farmhouse influences, and often with Gothic or Classical revival influences.

Prevailing wartime and postwar architectural trends depended on the unornamented, machine-inspired aesthetic of European modernism, which became known as the International style. With its clean lines, boxy volumes, and emphasis on horizontality, this architectural idiom, in a vernacular interpretation, is found throughout the study area. Some examples in the study area are Fire Station No. 7, 1331 Cutting Boulevard, Nystrom Village, the day care centers, the church at Florida Avenue and South 15th Street, Nystrom School, and a number of residential multi-unit buildings similar to the building at 1201-1207 Maine which dates to 1960.

Almost all the historic residential buildings within the neighborhood are of wood-frame construction. Early residential buildings are generally two stories with gabled roofs, front and rear yards, and traditional materials. Later one- and two-story buildings, constructed in the postwar era, often employ flat roofs, modern materials, exterior stucco, aluminum window framing, carports, exterior stairs, and the same general stripped down style.

Within the Nystrom neighborhood there is a mix of building types and architectural styles. Many resources related to this context remain within the Nystrom tract.

7. Context: Ethnic Heritage/Cultural Groups

As stated above, Richmond's population increased as new residents migrated for shipyard work and the city's demographics changed, leading to racial diversity during the war. Various institutions evolved to serve the community. A number of congregations have been established in the Nystrom neighborhood, many in the post-war era. The oldest church in the Nystrom neighborhood is the 7th Day Adventist Church at the corner of South 13th Street and Ohio Avenue, which was in this location at least as early as 1916. Another building that fulfilled a community function was the Rec Center near Virginia Avenue and South 10th Street.

While the neighborhood is largely residential, resources related to this context remain within the Nystrom tract.

8. Context: Healthcare

The Kaiser Field Hospital sits on the southern side of Cutting Boulevard, just outside the border of the Nystrom Addition Tract. Although outside the Nystrom neighborhood boundary, the hospital introduced a healthcare element in the neighborhood that came to include other medical facilities, with one, the methadone clinic, remaining within the neighborhood to the present day. Originally intended for use primarily as an emergency facility for the shipyards, the Field Hospital opened with only ten beds and initially occupied only the northeast corner of the block. Later, the building was expanded so that it came to fill the entire city

block. The Field Hospital operated as a Kaiser Permanente hospital until closing in 1995 and is a significant historic resource related to wartime industry in Richmond.

In addition, the Field Hospital spawned at least three other Kaiser facilities which are no longer extant, the Kaiser Laboratory at 1301-1313 Cutting Boulevard, within the boundaries of the old Nystrom Addition Tract, and the Kaiser Foundation Clinic at 1300 Potrero, at the rear of the hospital. In addition, the 1950 Sanborn map illustrates other health-related structures related to Kaiser, hospital storage on Potrero Avenue and a Health Center located in an apartment building at the northwest corner of South 14th Street and Cutting Boulevard, now the site of the aforementioned shuttered gas station. These ancillary buildings and the hospital created a strong Kaiser healthcare presence in this area in the post-war era.

The resources related to this context illustrate the evolution in healthcare issues that are related to the study area. During the war, the Field Hospital served to shipyard workers. As Kaiser expanded into a healthcare industry, its Richmond facilities expanded. The methadone clinic, illustrates social problems within the area specially related to drug use but also tied to unemployment and the loss of local industry.

9. Context: City Services

Fire House No. 7 at 1131 Cutting Boulevard sits within the Nystrom neighborhood boundary. The expansion of the fire department to this area was

part of increased services and infrastructure related to the intensification of wartime industries and the associated rise in population. In addition to the construction of Fire House No. 7 in 1943, Richmond's fire department constructed a new 8-man company at 41st and Clinton and an addition to an existing station at 31st and Cutting.

VI. Nystrom Neighborhood Historic Resources Representative of Historic Contexts

The following resources are located within the Nystrom neighborhood. Most are linked to World War II development. Those developed during World War II generally share similar architectural characteristics, construction techniques, and materials.

Nystrom Elementary School 230 Harbor Way South (formerly 320 South 10th Street)

The Nystrom school complex and the Maritime Child Development Center are bordered by South 10th Street on the west, South 12th Street on the east, Virginia Avenue to the south, and Florida Avenue to the north. (See maps at Appendices A-D.) The buildings that occupy the block are as follows:

- Nystrom School is a two-story structure, in plan two rectangular blocks set at right angles and with a narrow connection spanning a gap between the two. Built in 1942, of wood-frame construction, it houses a total of 32

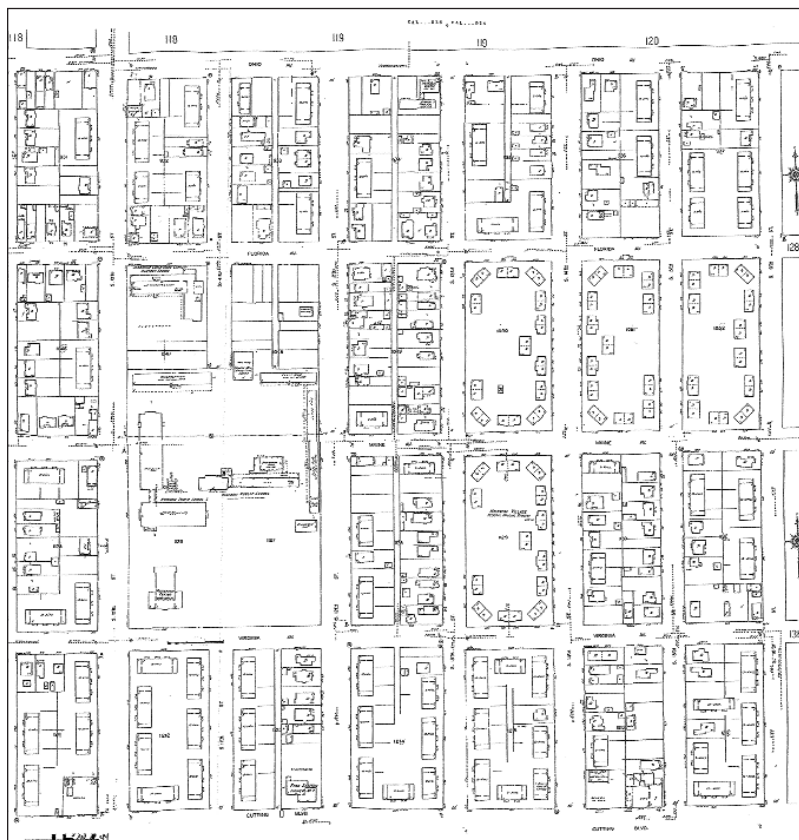
classrooms. The main elevation faces South 10th Street.

- In 1953 the old Nystrom Public School (constructed 1908) was demolished and an auditorium addition to the existing Nystrom School was built on the site. The auditorium building also houses a stage and kitchen. The auditorium is one of the few buildings in the complex that is not built on the perimeter of the block. Rather the building, roughly square in plan, sits in the crook of the Nystrom School "L." It is of fire proof construction, built of brick with concrete floors and roof.
- The kindergarten, ancillary to Nystrom School, was built in 1948. The long, narrow building is parallel to Maine Avenue and faces the rear of the Maritime Child Care Center. Of wood frame construction the school has large expanses of wood framed windows, an overhang, a side gabled roof, and horizontal wood siding.
- An addition to the Nystrom School, a single-story structure housing a total of 12 classrooms, was built in 1948-49. Built close to the eastern perimeter of the block, the building is long and narrow and parallels South 12th Street. The general contractor for the project was Marvin E. Collins of 5635 San Diego Street, El Cerrito, the town adjacent to Richmond. The wood-frame building was erected at a cost of \$86,249.
- The school bus garage, a single-story utilitarian structure with a gabled roof and an exterior

or stucco finish built in 1949 replaced the old Nystrom family barn that was previously used to house the school bus. The principal elevation of this ancillary building faces east onto South 12th Street.

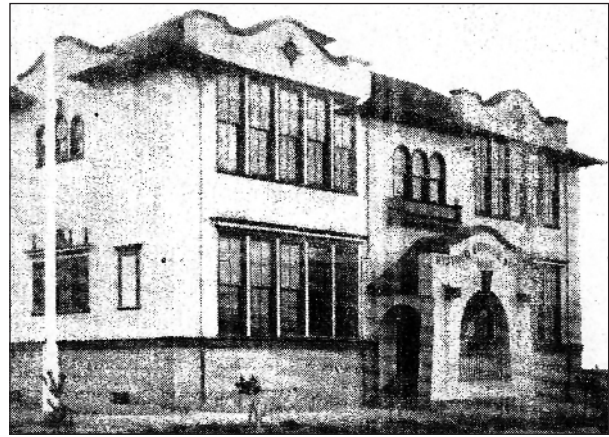
- At 242 South 11th Street a single-story kindergarten was constructed in 1966 of steel frame construction with fiberglass panel walls and wood floors.
- The Recreation Center at 360 South 10th Street, the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, was built in 1972 to house a recreation center and gym, replacing a previous

Rec Center on the same site, at the southwest corner of the block. The first building had been a single-story wood framed structure with wood trusses and was demolished in 1972. Owned by the City of Richmond, the existing building has an irregular footprint and massing with shed roofs projecting at various heights and angles and an exterior stucco finish at the lower level with shingles above. The architect was Joseph L. Bourg of Fisher/Jackson Associates, Inc. Architecture and Planning, located at 12 Osborne Court, Oakland. The general contracting and plumbing was carried out by Millard H. Meyers of 1 First Street, Richmond.



The image at left illustrates the Nystrom Tract. The Nystrom Public School is located on the site of the old Nystrom School (constructed 1908) formerly the location of the Nystrom Family Home and Farm.

The first Nystrom school building was named for J.R. Nystrom, patriarch of one of Richmond's early families and member of the first board of trustees of the Richmond School District. The original Nystrom School was built in 1908 and served grades one through six. Originally located on 13th Street between Virginia and Maine Streets, the first school was in the vicinity of the Nystrom home and was located on Block 619. The main façade of the building then faced west toward 13th Street. The original school, rectangular in plan, was elevated above a vented masonry base, with a stucco finish and a tile roof. Carried out in an eclectic revival architectural style, the building was distinguished by curvilinear gables across the top of each elevation, a motif that was repeated at the extruded entrance porch. A deep overhang flanked the roof gables. The porch was accessed by side-facing arched doorways. The porch's main wall plane was punctured by a tall wide arch with a balustrade and keystone below curved signage reading "Nystrom Public School, 1908." Another distinguishing feature of the main elevation was four window planes comprised of five tall four-over-four, double-hung windows corresponding to each of the four classrooms. A smaller triple arched window motif appeared in the center of the main elevation and at the sides. On the interior, the school consisted of four classrooms, two on each floor of the two-story building. Boys and girls were segregated in on either side of the building with a staircase placed in the center. The schoolhouse had a narrow, single-story addition extending toward the rear comprised of a covered walkway separated by a wall and housing two separate toilets for the boys and



The original Nystrom School, built circa 1908.

the girls. The building was equipped with electric lighting from the time of construction.

Within the first decade after its construction, the Nystrom School was moved to the site of the original Nystrom home between 10th and 12th Streets near Maine. At that time J.R. Nystrom and the city exchanged the school lot for another piece of land. The Nystrom home can be characterized as homestead, ranch, or simple semi-rural home. No clear evidence or documentation has been found to support a more definitive characterization. It is clear, however, that the Nystrom lot was large, undivided and expansive enough at 70 acres to include its own orchard. In any case, the school did come to occupy the land that was the Nystrom ranch, illustrated in the 1916 Sanborn as a large property and orchard. Neither the north-south running South 11th Street nor Maine Avenue bisected the lot, making the lot unusually large. The school building was re-oriented to face south, the same direction as the Nystrom home. It is not clear exactly when the school was moved.

One source indicates 1911, however, the 1916 Sanborn map shows the building still in the original 13th Street location. In 1922 the Richmond School Board constructed a single-story addition of frame construction to the Nystrom Public School at a cost of \$34,000. The single story addition, rectangular in plan stretched out from the school toward South 12th Street. An auditorium was added at the same time. Between the years 1933 and 1943, the enrollment rose from 223 pupils to 2,823 with a teaching staff of 58 teachers. In 1942, a new school building consisting of 40 classrooms was built by the government. In 1944 the enrollment topped 3,000. Originally, the old barn was used to house the school bus.²¹ The barn was replaced in 1949 with the construction of a new school bus garage at 301 South 12th Street, built at a cost of \$6,280 by Thomas Yeadle.²² The old Nystrom Public School was demolished in 1953 by the Dolan Wrecking Company of 1414 San Pablo Way in El Cerrito.²³

Maritime Day Care Center 1014 Florida Avenue

Built in 1943, the Maritime Child Development Center was funded and constructed by the United States Maritime Commission as part of a larger development that also included housing, an elementary school, and a fire station.²⁴ The Maritime Child Development Center provided childcare for women working in the Kaiser shipyards. The housing was demolished after the war but the other structures remain. Operated by the Richmond School District, the Maritime Child Development Center incorporated progressive



Maritime Day Care Center, constructed 1943.

educational programming, and was staffed with nutritionists, psychiatrists, and certified teachers. It had a capacity of 180 children per day. Unlike the federally-funded WPA day care facilities implemented during the New Deal, the World War II centers were not intended for use by the destitute, but for working mothers. The Kaiser-sponsored Child Care Centers gained a reputation for innovative and high quality childcare. The Maritime Child Development Center continues to function as a childcare facility to the present day. The facility was owned by the Richmond School District until June 1999 at which time it was sold to the West Contra Costa Unified School District.

The Maritime Child Development Center sits in close proximity to the Nystrom School, on part of the land that was the Nystrom family farm and orchard. The entire block, larger than a regular city block is given over to educational structures. The Maritime Child Development Center is a wood frame structure, L-shaped in plan, executed in a spare, modernist style. Located on the corner

of Tenth Street and Florida Avenue, the front entrance faces north onto Florida Avenue and protrudes from the main wing of the building, the north wing. A shorter, secondary, single-story wing (the east wing) extends from the northeast corner of the site toward the south. Harbor Way borders the western perimeter of the property and offers a view into the expansive playground. The western side of the property is enclosed by a chain link fence.

The architectural features of the Maritime Center that are characteristic of the Modern movement are a long, low building profile, a flat roof, long expanses of horizontal ribbon windows, flat canopies over doors, and the angular walls that flank the entrance. The building materials are also characteristic of the Modern movement. Typical materials are aluminum framing for windows and doors, natural wood members, rafters and supports, laminated wood beams, slim metal pilasters, steel, and concrete. The form of the structure is asymmetrical with a setback second story only on the main wing. A distinctive feature of the main elevation is the angular entrance portico jutting from the northeast end of the north wing. The flat roof over the portico is supported by walls that flank the portico and slant outward at the top.

The north and east elevations of the building are defined by strong horizontal lines and rows of high-level windows. By contrast, the playground elevations are comprised of two stories. The squared tower element is located in the center of the rear elevation and protrudes into the playground. The tower encloses a tubular slide that was designed for use as a fire escape from the

second floor. At the building rear, each classroom exits onto the playground through a set of double metal doors.

Nystrom Village **220-230 Marina Way South**

Named for J.R. Nystrom, Nystrom Village straddles the former Nystrom property and the Griffin Watrous Addition Tract, a separate subdivision originally owned by the family of Nystrom's wife. Nystrom Village covers four city blocks, approximately 12.8 acres and Nystrom Village is bordered by 13th to 16th Streets, Maine, Virginia and Florida.

Initially intended as permanent housing for low-income families, Nystrom Village was originally designed with fifty-one buildings, all duplexes, forming 102 dwelling units and consisting of 29 one bedroom, 56 two bedroom, and 17 three bedroom units. The project was changed at the request of the United States Housing Authority to a defense housing project for civilian defense workers during a "period of emergency."²⁵ The Nystrom Village housing project was constructed



Nystrom Village.

in 1941 under the auspices of the newly created Richmond Housing Authority (RHA), which still owns and administers the property. The RHA was formed to carry out the Federal Public Housing program for low-income families. Nystrom Village was one of two projects built but then quickly converted to war housing. Low-income housing projects were overlooked as the need for temporary wartime housing surged.²⁶

The Richmond Housing Authority was designated as the Agent of the Federal Works Administrator for the construction, having been chosen as the first Local Housing Authority in the United States to manage a defense project by the Division of Defense Housing. The Richmond Housing Authority was the first housing authority in the country to manage a defense housing project built under the Lanham Act of 1940. The Atchison Village housing project was the first under the Richmond Housing Authority, followed by Nystrom Village. Eventually, Richmond developed the largest federally funded housing program in the nation, totaling some 21,000 units many of which were torn down after the war.²⁷

Built on vacant land acquired from various owners, no structures were demolished for the construction of Nystrom Village. The buildings of Nystrom Village cover only 14% of the lot, allowing for expansive open space and wide spaces between buildings for children to play. Each of the 51 buildings that form Nystrom Village was built to accommodate two-families. The buildings are of frame construction with a stucco exterior. Originally rents for the Nystrom Village residences ranged from \$32.50 to \$39.50

monthly. The project was built to have a structural life of 40 to 60 years. Upon completion, the Nystrom Village units were considered to be well-designed and were “popular with tenants.”²⁸

Architectural services for Nystrom Village were provided by the firm of Narbett, Bangs and Hurd.²⁹ The project was funded by the United States Housing Authority.³⁰ The project was built by Louis C. Dunn Inc. of 799 Monadnock Building, San Francisco for the sum of \$289,202.³¹

Nystrom Village and its nearby contemporaries Atchison Village (designed by architect Carl I. Warnecke), Atchison Village Annex (designed by architect Frederick H. Reimers), and Triangle Court, were large well-planned sites, with space for children’s play areas, parking, safe and quiet streets, open lawns and landscaping. Each dwelling was provided with ample sunlight and air and outward-looking vistas. Though accommodating large numbers of families, the population densities were comparable, per acre, with those of single-family residences. These building projects were meant to illustrate the economic advantages of large-scale building while maintaining an intimate scale. Nystrom Village is significant for embodying innovative design ideals for public housing of the era.

During the war, a little over 60% of the city’s total population lived in wartime housing projects. Caucasians comprised about 79% of the project residents and African Americans made up 19%. These racial percentages remained constant from 1943 through 1951. The projects were com-

pletely segregated. As late as the fall of 1952 no African Americans had lived in either of Richmond's permanent low-rent housing project, Triangle Court and Nystrom Village. Atchison Village, the third project built for permanent occupancy but housed temporary residents, did not have any African American tenants until 1953. The law required that the housing developments admit African American tenants but the reality was quite different.³²

Today, Nystrom Village has a high level of integrity. The buildings appear to be well-maintained. In 1981, one of the residential duplexes was remodeled for conversion to a community building at a total project cost of \$16,000. Over time, the buildings have been subject to cycles of regular repair, such as landscaping, heating and mechanical systems upgrades, and plaster repair. In 1997 three units were made accessible for the disabled and exterior ramps were installed. The work was carried out by Koo Construction of Sacramento at a cost of \$114,600.

At Nystrom Village, the landscaping is spare but well maintained. Originally the residences that comprise the four city blocks of Nystrom Village housing were sited with space on all sides to allow for free circulation around the buildings and to access to the open central space at the center of the block. One modification generally applied throughout the complex is the incorporation of fencing in between structures to limit access from the street to the center of the lot. The residences are surrounded by lawns with swathes of grass along the perimeter of blocks, separating the sidewalks from the curbs and streets. The

open space at the center of the lots conveyed a garden setting though plantings are minimal with open lawn being the dominant landscape feature. Low hedges and shrubs remain adjacent to residential structures. Nystrom Village has no designated parking or accommodation for cars, except for curbside parking at the perimeter of the development.

Nystrom Village is not a designated Historic Resource within the city of Richmond. Unlike Atchison Village, it is not listed in the National Register.

Wartime Apartment Buildings

During the war years, public housing in the form of dormitories, temporary houses, and apartment buildings were also constructed for the shipyard workers. Most of these structures were meant to be temporary. Typically, the apartment buildings were two-stories, comprised of 9-13 units, with exterior stair cases and carports flanking each side, and were oriented with the longer, main ele-



A four-unit building at 1201-1207 Maine, built in 1960.

vation parallel to the street. As in other neighborhoods in Richmond, formerly vacant blocks in the Nystrom neighborhood were infilled with the ubiquitous apartment buildings. As an example of how pervasive the building type was, in the four blocks between Virginia Avenue, Cutting Boulevard, and 10th through 14th Streets, 25 apartment buildings, totaling 297 living units, were constructed. All these structures, together with various smaller single dwellings, were demolished between 1950 and 1960. It appears that no wartime apartment buildings remain in the Nystrom neighborhood. A residential building at 1201-1207 Maine, a 4-plex, was initially thought to be a renovated wartime apartment building. Like the wartime apartment building, 1201-1207 Maine has a pair of carports on the east and west sides of the main structure, an exterior stair, the same general massing, materials and stripped down style. In addition, the main elevation parallels the street. Most convincing is that the extant building sits in the same footprint of an original 9-unit wartime apartment building. However, permits held by the City of Richmond Planning Department indicate that a consent was issued on November 3, 1960 to owner, Gordon B. Paff, to construct four, four-room units of 720 square feet each, with carport attachments, at a total cost of \$21,000. The contractor was Reeves Construction Co. located at 1302 Solano Avenue, Richmond.³³

Fire Station No. 7 **1131 Cutting Boulevard**

Located at 12th Street and Cutting Boulevard, Fire Station No. 7 was built c. 1943.³⁴ According to city records, the firehouse is sited on Block 14

of Nystrom's Addition Tract. Initially built on a city block that was filled in with a row of five east-facing dwellings to the north of the firehouse, the building's setting has changed over time due to the demolition of surrounding residences. The dwellings were demolished after 1965.³⁵ The lack of neighboring structures on the north, south, and west, and the wide expanse of Cutting Boulevard result in a setting that is defined by open space.

The firehouse is defined by strong horizontal geometry, broad stucco wall expanses, flat roofs, and irregularly-spaced window openings with aluminum sliders. It is two-stories at the rear with a single story garage in front. The main elevations are the south, facing Cutting Boulevard, and the east on 12th Street. A trio of squared door openings spans the garage that faces Cutting Boulevard. Above the middle of the three fire truck doors is signage reading "Fire Station No. 7." The openings have overhead doors. The main entrance to the building is located in the east ele-



Fire Station No. 7, built 1943.

vation below a curved canvas canopy, which is not original. At the rear there are two additional garage door openings. The upper floor houses sleeping quarters for firemen. The building was previously used as a Police Substation as well.³⁶

The building has been well-maintained and upgraded with a new roof, remodeled kitchen, expanded sleeping quarters and ancillary storage building added over time. Nonetheless, the building retains a high level of integrity on the exterior and conveys its original appearance. The fire station is significant as a representative example of the infrastructure expansion required to accommodate wartime needs.³⁷

Kaiser Field Hospital 1330 Cutting Boulevard

The Richmond Field Hospital for the Kaiser Shipyards at 1330 Cutting Boulevard opened on August 10, 1942. The hospital was financed by the United States Maritime Commission, sponsored by Henry J. Kaiser's Permanente Foundation, and run by Medical Director Sidney R. Garfield, M.D. The Field Hospital served as the mid-level component of a three-tier medical care system that also included six well-equipped First Aid Stations at the individual shipyards, and the main Permanente Hospital in Oakland, where the most critical cases were treated. Together, these facilities served the employees of the Kaiser shipyards who had signed up for the Permanente Health Plan (commonly referred to as the "Kaiser Plan"), one of the country's first voluntary pre-paid medical plans, and a direct precursor to the Health Maintenance Organizations.



Kaiser Field Hospital, built 1942.

The Field Hospital is a single-story wood frame structure designed in a simple modernist mode common for wartime buildings when materials rationing made it difficult to build with more substantial materials. The Field Hospital is set back from Cutting Boulevard and is fronted by an expanse of lawn in front of the hospital. The main building form is dominated by horizontal lines. The building has a white stucco exterior, a flat roof, flat canopies over the doors, horizontal ribbon windows, typically casements, slender metal pilotis, and an asymmetrical facade with a distinctive two-story square tower. Although the initial layout, massing, and configuration have been altered, the building conveys the basic original design intent.

The main entrance faces north onto Cutting Boulevard and is located on the east side of the main façade. The entrance consists of a porch, squared tower, and main entrance doors set within a window wall. At the tower, the east, west and south facades feature dark blue medical crosses,

original elements. Four pairs of slender metal pilotis support the roof overhang over this entrance. As at all elevations, the main façade has a low-slung, single-story profile, cornice overhang and bands of horizontal windows. Horizontality is reiterated by the ribbon windows which are the main decorative element throughout the exterior of the hospital. The main elevation has two entrances, one on the west side, flush with the street, which is comprised of a glazed door with patterned glazed sidelights and a square transom, raised over the ground level by three steps, and another to the east of the tower but within the wall plane of the original façade. This aluminum-framed entrance is comprised of a sliding, glazed door set in between two full-height fixed-panes that form a window wall.

The east and west elevations are mostly flush with the lot line, though there is some play of wall planes as recessed areas accommodate entrances, ramps, steps and doors. On the north side of the east elevation, the original wall was brought out toward the lot line as a small addition to house a series of offices; this wall plane is spanned by a horizontal window band comprised of casements interrupted by a single door above a ramp. A void along the east elevation, a connection between two separate building additions, is the location of an emergency entrance with aluminum-framed doors and fixed-pane windows. The east elevation deviates from the rest of the building in that the sidewalk swings in toward the building to accommodate a series of angled parking spaces at the northeast corner.

Like the east elevation, the west elevation is a long expanse interrupted by squared openings with recessed doors. The doors are above ground level and are accessed by stairs and ramps with white-painted pole handrails.

The building sits just outside the southern border of the Nystrom Addition Tract and was built on vacant land. The hospital was one of the early buildings in the area. Historic photographs show that the surrounding lots toward the south were mostly vacant. Originally intended for use primarily as an emergency facility, the Field Hospital opened with only ten beds and initially occupied only the northeast corner of the block. Later, the building expanded so that it came to fill the entire city block. The Field Hospital operated as a Kaiser Permanente hospital until closing in 1995 and is a significant historic resource related to wartime industry in Richmond.

In addition, the Field Hospital spawned at least three other Kaiser facilities which are no longer extant, the Kaiser Laboratory at 1301-1313 Cutting Boulevard, within the boundaries of the old Nystrom Addition Tract, (see description that follows) and the Kaiser Foundation Clinic at 1300 Potrero, at the rear of the hospital. The building, which housed the Kaiser Foundation Clinic at 1300 Potrero, is illustrated on a 1960s-era Sanborn map as a single-story structure, square in plan, of wood post and beam construction and located at the northwest corner of the block. It is not clear if the building that occupies the space is the same building extremely altered or if the Kaiser was demolished. The 1950 Sanborn map

illustrates other health-related structures likely belonging to Kaiser; specifically, a single-story structure, rectangular in plan, for hospital storage in the 1300 block of Potrero Avenue and a Health Center located in an apartment building at the northwest corner of South 14th Street and Cutting Boulevard intersection, now the site of a boarded-up gas station. These ancillary buildings and the hospital created a strong Kaiser presence related to healthcare in this area in the post-war era. The building remains significant as one of the few remaining World War II-era structures in Richmond and represents an important moment in the history of the military, when thousands of workers converged on the small city of Richmond to produce the hundreds of Liberty ships that helped to lead the Allied forces to victory. More specifically, the Richmond Field Hospital was built as a wartime facility benefiting those shipyard workers.

Kaiser Foundation Hospital Laboratory 1301-1313 Cutting Boulevard

Visually connected to the Kaiser Field Hospital across the street, the simple, single-story architecture of 1301-1313 Cutting Boulevard is ancillary to, and complements, the older Field Hospital, which it faces. The building at 1301-1313 Cutting is actually comprised of two separate buildings, 1301-03 Cutting and 1313 Cutting. Neither building was purpose built by the Kaiser Corporation. In 1961 the Stege Market was moved from 990 South 47th Street to the 1301-1303 Cutting location, the westernmost of the two side-by-side lots. Shortly thereafter it was acquired for use as the



Kaiser Foundation Hospital Laboratory.

Kaiser Foundation Hospital Laboratory. Within the next two years, the building at 1313 Cutting was constructed by R.H. Myers for the Kaiser Foundation.

In 1945, the early owner, if not the original owner, of the Stege Market on south 47th Street was Johnnie Lee. In 1951 the building changed hands and two years later, then owner, Sammy Lico, built a single-story addition to the grocery store adding another entrance to the main facade. In 1961 the Stege Market, replete with an electric Lucky Beer sign, moved from 990 South 47th Street to the 1301-1303 Cutting location, for which a construction permit for the new foundation was issued in May 1961. R.H. Myers, a general contractor, owned the new lot on Cutting Boulevard and lived nearby, at 644 South 14th Street. Building permits specify that the Stege Market was to be moved to the Nystrom Addition Tract for use as two stores. Special conditions were imposed by the Planning Department, such as the requirement that building have a stucco

wash or painted exterior, that it be placed on the lot per the plot, that it have fencing and shrubbery, and that there be off-street parking.³⁸ By November of 1961, the building was in the process of being remodeled as a laboratory for its new owner, the Kaiser Foundation, making it seem unlikely that the building was ever used as a retail store at that location. The existing X-ray room was redesigned and new X-ray equipment installed by the Sicular X-ray Co. in March of 1962.

In November 1963 a permit was issued to owner R.H. Myers to erect a wood frame and stucco business building on the neighboring lot at 1313 Cutting Boulevard, part of the old Nystrom Addition Tract. The building measured 50' x 68', roughly the same footprint at 1301-03. Built at a cost of \$25,000, 1313 Cutting was connected by a short passage to the adjacent structure and the two buildings were treated as one medical office facility occupied by a single tenant, Kaiser. The interiors of the medical offices were remodeled in 1972 by Permanente Services at a cost of \$25,000, and again in 1979 by C. Overaa Co., general contractors. It is not clear when the building was sold by the Kaiser Foundation but by 1979 it was known as the Richmond Bay Industrial Health Medical Clinic.

Like the Field Hospital, the 1301-1313 Cutting has long, low lines, a flat roof, and a stuccoed exterior. At close inspection, it is clear that the main elevation is comprised of two similar but separate facades. The façade of the building at 1301-1303 Cutting is asymmetrical with three separate single doors (two of the three doors are

glazed) grouped together at the west side. A narrow fixed pane window corresponds to each door. A larger expanse of glazing balances the rest of the elevation. The glazing is framed by a decorative masonry base below and a deep flat canopy that spans the entire facade, an element taken directly from the design of the Field Hospital. A distinctive feature of this building is a high squared parapet. The building at 1313 Cutting has a slightly lower profile, an asymmetrical recessed entrance, and five large, fixed pane windows above a masonry base. This building has a wide boxed eave, the bottom edge of which is painted blue, mimicking the canopy of the adjoining building. The paint scheme serves to link the two buildings and is the same as the current (also the historic) paint scheme of the Field Hospital. Certain features such as the low-slung quality, the horizontal canopies, decorative masonry base, and especially the 5-paned glazed window wall are meant to mimic and visually connect the building to the Field Hospital.

The building has been owned since at least 1994 by Contra Costa County and now serves as a methadone clinic. It appears to be maintained in a very good condition. The only other structure remaining on the block is the adjacent gas station, now boarded up, at 1333 Cutting Boulevard, on the corner of Cutting and 14th Street (now Marina Way). Other structures, including 6 multi-unit apartment buildings, probably constructed as temporary wartime housing but demolished by the mid-60s, and a few residences, demolished post-1965, once filled in the rest of the block. The rest of the city block is now an open expanse of

green grass. A play structure and a small concrete foundation remnant from a house remain toward the northeast corner of the block.

Frosty King **171 Harbor Way**

The existing commercial structure at 171 Harbor Way was originally built in 1949 for Zesto Dairy Products, Inc. Zesto Dairy Products was based in Lodi, California at 508 Lodi Avenue. The general contractor was Stath Construction Company of San Lorenzo. By the 1970s the business was known as “John’s Diner” and was owned by Joe Stroud of Orinda, California. In 1979 the signage was changed and the business was known as “Coca-Cola Johnny’s Hamburgers and Breakfast.”³⁹

With a low profile, flat roof and a single story, this modest commercial building exemplifies the tenets of mid-century modern architectural design. The elements that give the building style and identify it as being of its era are the canted



Frosty King, constructed 1949.

wall planes, low brick base, glazed façade with glass entrance door, corner glass windows. Three of the building’s four elevations are utilitarian and plain stucco with simple aluminum windows and are not especially noteworthy in terms of their architecture. The main elevation however gives the building its style and definition. The principal facade wraps around to both side elevations. Since it was constructed the building has been free-standing with sufficient space for vehicles to circle it and for parking. It is not clear if the building ever functioned as a “drive-thru.” Frosty King remains in operation as a commercial establishment and the building retains a high level of integrity.

Agricultural Farmhouses

Before the Nystrom neighborhood achieved significance for its association with World War II and wartime industry, it was a populated with families who lived an agricultural or semi-rural lifestyle. While little evidence exists, it would not have been unusual for these homes to have a small dairy, orchard or egg operation. Later as the neighborhood was more fully developed it became solely residential and moved away from its agricultural roots. Many of the homes from that earlier era survive. The examples listed below are meant to be representative types of the remaining farmhouses in the neighborhoods.

203 South 13th Street

This single story residence at the corner of South 13th Street and Florida Avenue is one of the Nystrom neighborhood’s most imposing. Roughly square in plan, the house has a low, wide project-



203 South 13th Street.

ing circular bay juxtaposed by a squat round tower at the porch corner which distinguishes the house. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is punctured by a pair of corbelled red brick chimneys. Carved brackets that fully encircle the house support a deep overhang at the roofline. The walls of the wood-frame structure are clad in clapboards. Overscaled, asymmetrical forms characterize the two street-facing facades though the simple house is at the same time intimately scaled. At the northeast corner, the deep porch, recessed behind low wide arches, leads to the main entrance door. Typical fenestration throughout is double-hung one-over-one sash windows. At the circular bay, each window is separated by Tuscan columns. Smaller versions of the column are used as decorative elements on the porch. The house is built over a raised basement inset with windows just above ground level. The house is surrounded by simple landscaping and a narrow swath of lawn above a concrete curb in front of each elevation. There is a fenced yard at rear.

Records held by the City of Richmond Planning Department indicate that the residence was constructed in 1903; a garage was added in 1934.⁴⁰

239 South 13th Street

This residence recalls a farmhouse in the Gothic Revival style. It is comprised of two stories and an attic. The house is rectangular in plan and has projecting gabled entrance porch that mimics the pitch and configuration of the street-facing roof gable. The main section of the roof is gabled with a shed-roofed dormer at the south side of the second story. Outriggers at the gabled ends are supported by triangulated bracing. The walls of the wood-frame structure are clad in narrow horizontal siding at the first floor while the wall plane within the gable is covered with coursed shingles.

The front (west) facade of the building is asymmetrical with the entrance porch set to the side. At the entrance porch cheek wall flank the front steps and the main door is fronted by a half glazed screen door. The window openings on the



239 South 13th Street.



1212 Ohio Avenue.

main facade appear to be original and consist of two pair of ganged windows, a set on each floor. The windows appear to be recent replacements. The second floor windows are centered below the gable. Immediately below the gable peak is a narrow window opening of four fixed panes. Based on analysis of Sanborn maps, the construction date for the house falls in between 1916 and 1930.

1212 Ohio Avenue

The additions that have been constructed on both sides of this structure and the faux stone cladding at the base of the main façade do not obscure the historic roots of this two-story residence located at 1212 Ohio Street, between 12th and 13th Streets. The wood-frame structure is distinguished by a wide street-facing gambrel roof with a closed return comprised of wide bargeboards. The wall plane of the gable has been clad in vertical board siding, a non-historic finish. The roof is cross-gabled and covered with composition shingles. The front (west) façade of the building is

asymmetrical with a recessed entrance porch at the east end, juxtaposed by a large window opening on the west side of the main floor. On the second story, there are double-hung windows centered on the elevation. The principal elevation of this two-story house is a well-balanced composition that nicely juxtaposes the projecting squared window with the porch and recessed entrance. The windows are replacements. Despite various modifications that have altered the building's integrity, the house remains a testament to the neighborhood's agricultural era.

VII. Integrity Analysis

Integrity involves seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. These aspects closely relate to the resource's significance and must be primarily intact for National or California Register eligibility. Resources that have lost a great deal of their integrity are generally not eligible for the National Register. However, the California Register regulations have specific language regarding integrity which note:

It is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register... {California Code of Regulations Title 15, 11.5 (c)}. Many resources are eligible as district contributors even if altered. As a whole a district must retain enough integrity to convey a sense of time and place as well as its

importance within the associated historic contexts.

Specific to the Nystrom neighborhood, the following characteristics have been analyzed for integrity.

Street Grid Pattern and Alleys

The rear alleys that bisect each block of the Nystrom neighborhood were unique within the overall street pattern in Richmond, though not in other towns throughout California at the time. Some alleys are no longer extant as at Nystrom Village. The alleys were a distinguishing feature of the Nystrom Addition Tract, not common to all blocks and streets in this part of Richmond. The gridded street pattern is uniform as are the size and configuration of the blocks and are common to this part of Richmond.



Typical alley in the Nystrom Neighborhood.

Retention of the Nystrom

Homestead/Orchard Lot Configuration

Although the gridded street pattern of Richmond prevails in the Nystrom neighborhood, there is a large parcel that remains largely whole. Although both Maine Avenue and South 11th Street continue on either side of the large block, neither bisects the parcel that roughly corresponds to the old Nystrom orchard. The Nystrom Elementary School and its associated buildings occupy the lots that originally formed the Nystrom family farm and orchard.

Buildings

Richmond has World War II era buildings and sites that have retained their historic integrity, and former home front sites that have been converted to new uses. Structures remaining from the World War II era in the Nystrom neighborhood, include the child daycare center, Nystrom Elementary School, the fire house, shipyard worker housing and the Kaiser Field Hospital.

The demolition of wartime housing, especially the 9- and 13- unit apartment buildings, was not surprising given that these structures were built quickly, with limited materials, and for a single, temporary purpose. With much of the housing for war workers still intact, the neighborhood retains much of its WWII-era appearance and feeling. Selected building demolitions reflect both the hard times that befell Richmond in the post-war era as it moved away from wartime industry to a manufacturing and warehousing based economy. The demolition of wartime housing, especially the 9- and 13- unit apartment buildings, was not surprising given that these structures were built

quickly, with limited materials, and for a single, temporary purpose. Despite the demolitions, the integrity of the Nystrom neighborhood is high.

Landscape Features

Historically a sparse residential landscape, the area is lacking in street trees. While individual trees exist in front of residences and groups of trees can be seen in rear yards, the overall landscape is not defined by plantings. Houses with fenced in yards dominate the scene. As previously stated, the Nystrom Village housing project provides a large amount of open space for the use of the residents within the perimeters of the property. The dominant green space in the study area is found along the neighborhood's southern border. Here, four city blocks bordered by Cutting Boulevard, Virginia Avenue, 14th Street and Harbor Way, once the location of wartime apartment buildings, have been returned to open space. During the period of significance, fewer landscape features existed due to the predominance of residential structures and the area was more built up with housing and more densely populated.

In addition to built features and plantings, the area is defined by a strictly gridded and uniform street pattern which is integral to the landscape of the neighborhood. This element is analyzed above.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Significance of the Nystrom Neighborhood

A microcosm for the development of Richmond, the Nystrom neighborhood typifies land use patterns which shifted from agricultural, grain fields, dairy farms, and family ranch houses, to divided city lots at first sparsely populated, then totally filled in during the World War II era with homes, schools, and churches. Nystrom was one of the neighborhoods where the shipyard workers lived. The neighborhood's significance derives from its relationship to wartime industry and proximity to the Kaiser shipyards and the explosive development that occurred in this period in Richmond. A comparison of the 1930 and 1950 Sanborn maps dramatically illustrates the wartime impact to the Nystrom neighborhood and to Richmond as a whole. The 1930 Sanborn map depicts a lightly populated area comprised of 20 city blocks, which had been divided and parceled since 1903. Of those 20 blocks, 3 entire blocks remained unbuilt upon, and an additional 7 blocks had fewer than three dwellings per 18-lot block. By 1950 density had risen spectacularly, with construction occurring on almost all lots.

The cultural landscape of the neighborhood still reflects this dramatic time in Richmond's history. The town remains inhabited by descendants of people who migrated to California to work in the shipyards and the workers themselves. The Nystrom neighborhood gains its significance from its World War II affiliation and proximity to the former shipyards.

Period of Significance

The period of significance is defined as the span of time in which a resource attains the significance for which it meets the National Register criteria. The years 1941 to 1960 mark the period of significance of the Nystrom Neighborhood.

Lightly populated until the late 1930s, the neighborhood underwent dramatic change during the WWII era. The year 1941 marks the beginning of the period of significance. Gearing up for the war effort, the adjacent Kaiser shipyards began operation in January 1941. The manpower required to fuel the shipyard led to explosive growth in Richmond and resulted in the need for housing, services and an improved infrastructure. Public housing in the form of dormitories, temporary houses, and apartment buildings were constructed for shipyard workers throughout Richmond, including the nearby Nystrom Neighborhood. Most of these structures were meant to be temporary. Two-story apartment buildings filled in formerly vacant blocks. While many structures and other types of housing from the period remain, all the two-story structures described above were demolished. This large-scale demolition of wartime apartment buildings was nearly complete by 1960. Consequently, 1960 marks the completion date of the period of significance.

Recommendations

The Nystrom neighborhood is a cohesive residential district with educational and religious facilities strongly aligned with its World War II connection. Though many neighborhoods in Richmond were home to shipyard workers, Nystrom is unique given its proximity to the Kaiser shipyards and the prevalence of remaining World War II era buildings and sites with integrity. The geographical boundaries of the Nystrom neighborhood correspond to the borders of the lot originally owned by J.R. Nystrom at the end of the 19th century and many of the neighborhood institutions are named for their proximity to the Nystrom farm. These conditions make a convincing argument for the nomination of the neighborhood as a National Register thematic district.

National Register Bulletin 15 states that “a district must be a definable geographic area that can be distinguished from surrounding properties by... documented differences in patterns of historic development or associations.”⁴¹ The geographical boundaries of a potential district correspond to the borders of the Nystrom lot. Further study of the area on the scale of a Cultural Landscape Study is recommended in addition to a visit to the area by a staff representative from the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) to ensure that the district meets National Register criteria before a nomination is prepared.

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X. Endnotes

¹ *Pan-Pacific Who's Who: An International Reference Work*. 1940-41. p. 446.

² *Pan-Pacific Who's Who: An International Reference Work*. 1940-41. p. 446.

³ City of Richmond, Planning Department, refers to the area as the Coronado neighborhood, although building permits are still issued with reference to the Nystrom Addition Tract.

⁴ These neighborhoods are defined by the Planning Department.

⁵ The obituary of J.R. Nystrom has been re-printed in a variety of sources. Biographical information from the obituary of J.R. Nystrom was reprinted in *A Family's Roots in Richmond: Recollections of a Lifetime Resident*, 1990, by Stanley Nystrom.

⁶ The adjoining Griffins farm would eventually become the Watrous Griffins Tract, the western border of which is present day south 14th Street, the easternmost boundary of the Nystrom Addition Tract.

⁷ Biographical information summarized from the obituary of J.R. Nystrom reprinted in *A Family's Roots in Richmond: Recollections of a Lifetime Resident*, 1990, by Stanley Nystrom.

⁸ *A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California*. Binder: Richmond Miscellanea, Richmond Public Library.

⁹ *A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California*. Binder: Richmond Miscellanea, Richmond Public Library.

¹⁰ City of Richmond Assessor's Block Book, Parcel Book 550, cover page.

¹¹ *Sales Pamphlet Richmond, California*, undated. Richmond Museum.

¹² *Richmond Neighborhood Profiles*. Summary of 1970 Census Data for Tracts 3790, 3800. 1973. p. 26.

¹³ Ibid. p. 26

¹⁴ *National Register Bulletin 15—How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, p.7.

¹⁵ *A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California*. Binder: Richmond Miscellanea, Richmond Public Library.

¹⁶ Information in this paragraph summarized from *A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California*. Binder: Richmond Miscellanea, Richmond Public Library.

¹⁷ *A Brief History of the City of Richmond, California*. Binder: Richmond Miscellanea, Richmond Public Library.

¹⁸ Background information on the United Heckathorn site in Richmond was found at:
http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/united-heckathorn/uni_toc.html

¹⁹ Wilson Moore. p. 8.

- ²⁰ *Richmond Neighborhood Profiles*. Summary of 1970 Census Data for Tracts 3790, 3800. 1973. p. 27.
- ²¹ “Know Your Local Schools, Nystrom School Named for Pioneer of City.” *Richmond Independent*. 25 October 1945.
- ²² Planning Department Records. Building File, 230 *Harbor Way South*.
- ²³ Planning Department Records. Building File, 230 *Harbor Way South*.
- ²⁴ The United States Maritime Commission and Service was an official U.S. Government organization set up in 1938 under provisions of the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. In 1938 President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered mass-production of Liberty ships and established the U.S. Maritime Service (USMS) for training purposes. The first Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission was Joseph P. Kennedy. Further background information on the U.S. Maritime Commission can be found at <http://www.USMM.org>.
- ²⁵ *First Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the City of Richmond*, Established January 24, 1941, Richmond California.
- ²⁶ Report on Housing, 1950. p. 9.
- ²⁷ The information in this paragraph is taken from the Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park website. <http://www.rosietheriveter.org/parkav.htm>
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ *First Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the City of Richmond*.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Wilson Moore. p. 84-85
- ³³ Planning Department Records. Building File, 1201-1207 *Maine*.
- ³⁴ City of Richmond Assessor’s Block Book, Parcel Book 550, cover page.
- ³⁵ Sanborn Map Company, *Richmond, California* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, updated 1962).
- ³⁶ Planning Department Records. Building File, 1131 *Cutting Boulevard*.
- ³⁷ Carey & Co. *National Register Eligibility Evaluation: Richmond Shipyards Associated Resources, Richmond, California*. May 30, 2001.
- ³⁸ Information in this paragraph summarized from Planning Department Records. Building File, 1303-1313 *Cutting Boulevard*.
- ³⁹ All information in this paragraph from Richmond Planning Department Records. Building File, “171 Harbor Way.”
- ⁴⁰ Planning Department Records. Building File, 203 *South 13th Street*.
- ⁴¹ *National Register Bulletin 15—How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, p.6.

